

Obituary

James Oliver Doyle, MB BCH, BAO 1943, LM 1944 DUBLIN, MRCP 1948, MD 1948 NUI (1918–2001)

Oliver Doyle qualified in medicine in Dublin and initially planned a career as a dermatologist. During army service in the second world war he was required to care for patients with sexually transmitted infections, which he found far more interesting and rewarding. Subsequently he worked as a venereologist in Liverpool, in Manchester with Dr Sidney Laird, and in Huddersfield as an SHMO. In 1972 he was advised to move south because of intractable sinusitis and became a consultant in Southampton and the Isle of Wight. In the following year he added Bournemouth to the list of hospitals at which he did clinical sessions and remained in post until his retirement in 1983. To reduce travelling Oliver maintained homes on both the island and the mainland and commuted between clinics by ferry, hovercraft, rail, and on foot. He disliked driving, which bored him, and his Daimler car was sold after many years with just 4000 miles added to the clock. After retiring Oliver worked in genitourinary medicine all along the south coast for the next 5 years.

Oliver Doyle was born in Dublin, the youngest of five children who all qualified as doctors. His father, who owned a jewellery shop in the city, died while Oliver was still a small child but his mother took over the business and supported her family through their schooldays. Oliver was educated by the Christian Brothers and remained deeply grateful to them and his mother for the opportunity to study medicine.

Despite living in England for over 50 years Oliver remained an Irishman through and through and never lost his pronounced accent. This, along with a marked stutter, made him difficult to understand on first acquaintance and might have been expected to interfere with his relationship with patients. On the contrary, perhaps sensing his kindness, knowledge, non-judgmental approach, and quiet sense of humour, he was much liked by patients and no complaint was ever made. Oliver was a doctor of his time—inclined to be paternalistic and expecting his advice to be accepted by patients without too much discussion. The vast majority of his patients seemed completely happy with this arrangement! A doctor who delighted in seeing patients he spent most of his professional time doing so competently and caringly. He had no interest in management, feeling strongly that this should be left to managers who, likewise, should not interfere with doctors. His memory for both general and medical facts was phenomenal and led to him being used as a ready reference by his colleagues and friends.

Like many of his fellow countrymen Oliver was widely read and had a deep love of the theatre. He had a wonderful fund of stories including how, when living in theatrical digs in the north of England, he had tested a whole sequence of subsequently famous actors and actresses, including Sybil Thorndyke, on their lines. In later years he saw most productions at the Chichester Festival

theatre sitting in the foyer for as long as it took to get tickets for sold out performances. A fit man himself, who swam in the sea daily throughout the year until well into his 70s, he was an avid follower of sport and especially horseracing, of which he had an encyclopaedic knowledge. However, as a shrewd investor on the stock market he considered the returns from gambling altogether too unreliable and never placed a bet. Oliver had a great love and a wonderful eye for animals—his red setter won best of breed at Crufts. Visitors to his home had to brave his collection of parrots that loudly resented the intrusion. Oliver was well known among his friends for having no sense of direction and on one occasion was lost in Spain for several days. Despite this he won an orienteering award in his army years for bringing his men back to camp in record time. A man of initiative, despite being lost he had achieved this by getting the whole platoon a lift on a passing milk lorry!

Very few people knew Oliver well, but those who broke through the barrier of shyness and reserve took delight in a modest, well mannered, and amusing man with a wealth of memorable anecdotes. It fell to his lot to look after his mother, which he did devotedly into her 90s. To his regret he never married and outlived nearly all his family. Parkinson's disease and failing eyesight marred his final years.

Jean M Tobin